

## **Everglades: Points to Consider when Reading the Washington Post Series**

### **Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan**

One of the country's most significant environmental initiatives involves restoring the Everglades and the South Florida ecosystem. The Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan, approved by Congress in the Water Resources Development Act of 2000, provides a framework for restoring this ecosystem while providing for other water-related needs of the region. While it must be remembered that people are part of the ecosystem, too, the primary purpose of the legislation remains restoration.

Restoring the ecosystem in South Florida is a complex task, requiring coordination among 16 county governments, more than 130 municipalities, two tribal governments, numerous special interests, six Metropolitan Planning Councils, the South Florida Water Management District, five major State environmental and planning agencies, and eight Federal agencies, including the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The ultimate success of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan will hinge on the ability of these governments and groups to work together in an unprecedented level of partnership.

The Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan is a science-based plan that was developed by an interdisciplinary and interagency team of biologists, ecologists and other professionals having extensive experience in the south Florida ecosystem. State-of-the-art scientific and engineering knowledge and models were used throughout the plan development process. Yet, the restoration plan does not predict the exact ecological responses the Everglades will undergo as natural water flows are restored. There will always be some uncertainty about just how nature will respond. Scientists do know very well, however, the types of changes to expect and have developed the restoration plan accordingly.

Implementation of the restoration plan will rely heavily on our ability to learn and adapt as the Corps and its partners proceed through this long and complicated journey. The implementation strategy, therefore, includes an open public involvement process, adaptive management, pilot projects, and assurances that collectively will give us the flexible and robust system needed to arrive at a restored Everglades ecosystem.

Everglades restoration will only be achieved if all the partners remain committed to working through the complex, many faceted problems, with everyone involved continuing to bring their unique expertise and perspective to the table to implement the best solution possible.

More information on the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan may be obtained at: <http://www.evergladesplan.org>